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A COMPARISON OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN HIGH SCHOOL
SPANISH ONE CLASSES BETWEEN HISPANIC AND NON-HISPANIC
SURNAME STUDENTS

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Education:
Bilingual/Cross-Cultural


by
Joshua David Runyan
December 2002

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Approved by:



Dr. Kenneth Johns, First Reader

11-25-02
Date



Dr. Enrique Murillo, Second Reader

ABSTRACT

This project used reported grades to determine if there is a difference in academic performance in high school Spanish 1 classes between Spanish and Non-Spanish surname students. The subjects of the study are Spanish 1 high school students that have no proficiency at writing in Spanish and the treatment is the Spanish 1 classes. The three semester grades were analyzed and subgroups of Non-Spanish surname male and female along with their Spanish surname counterparts were established. A numerical value was established to calculate the mean.

Due to the fact that the substantial numerical difference is 1.0 on a 4.0 scale, none of the groups met the criteria and therefore, the hypothesis that female Spanish surname students would be academically superior was rejected by the data. However, certain trends among the ethnic and gender groups were identified as being unsubstantiated but relevant.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is only through the support, motivation, and patience of my wife Tasha, that I was able to finish this Master's program and this project. A special thanks to her as she cared for me, our precious Arianna, and for our soon-to-be-born baby.

I also greatly appreciate the professors of CSUSB who, through their training and expertise, taught me not only to teach all students effectively, but also to validate and celebrate the uniqueness brought by each one. I especially want to thank Dr. Kenneth Johns and Dr. Enrique Murillo for taking the time to support me through this project.

DEDICATION

To my loving mother as she smiles down upon me from heaven.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND

Introduction

Many Spanish surname students that currently attend American high schools do not have the ability to speak, read or write in Spanish. While some Spanish surname students may have grown up in households that speak Spanish fluently, others have parents for which Spanish is a foreign language. This study attempts to discover whether there is a difference in the academic performance of Spanish surname students in high school Spanish 1 language classrooms over their non-Spanish surname counterparts. This study is made possible by the fact that the foreign language department at Rubidoux High School in Jurupa Unified School District test the Hispanic eighth grade students' proficiencies in Spanish. Those who demonstrate a proficiency in Spanish will take native language courses in Spanish focusing on orthography and Spanish literature. This study also recognizes that, historically, Hispanic students have not had the academic achievement and that this may greatly affect the findings.

General Introductory Remarks

The ability to succeed academically in Spanish 1 classes is directly related to the educational gap that exists between Hispanic high school students and their non-Hispanic Anglos counterparts in terms of academic achievement. Although Hispanics are the largest growing minority group in the United States (Duany and Pittman, 1990; U.S. Census Bureau, 1996, 1991, 1990, 1988: Valdiviewsa and Davis, 1988), they have the highest dropout rates among the other ethnic groups. In fact in 1991, one-third of Hispanic 16- to 24-year-old individuals had either not finished high school or was no longer enrolled. Along with dropout rates, studies indicate that Hispanic students have lower scores in standardized achievement tests, poor attendance rates, behavior problems, and low college participation rates (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1991, Tables 9, 98, 102-115). This lack of academic attainment in education has long lasting social and economic repercussions as it severely limits the opportunities to join the work force; increases poverty, delinquency, and teenage pregnancy; and promotes citizens incapable of maintaining a vibrant democracy (Megan, Hubbard, & Villanueva, 1994/ Mehan, Villanueva, Hubbard, & Lintz, 1996). The aforementioned studies support the

assertion that in America, there is a direct correlation to educational attainment and the social, economic well-being to both individuals and to the ethnic group in general.

There are many reasons that a large number of Spanish surname students don't have proficiency in Spanish. Due to the strong xenophobic attitudes, regarding language and culture, of current American sentiment towards minority groups, there is, and has always been, a strong pressure for the acculturation and Americanization of the members of minority groups. There are a growing number of minority groups that are exposed to such social pressures as they leave their home countries to come to America searching for a better life. This pressure is intensified with every generation that grows up in American schools and in the Anglo-dominant society. America as defined in the boiling pot theory, attempts to boil away any elements of minority cultures that are not congruent with English-only, Anglo, Protestant traditions. As a direct result of this pressure, many minority groups have chosen to abandon their culture and heritage in exchange for the American dream.

One of the sacrifices that have been made is the discontinued use of native languages. Many members of minority groups have lost command of their native language, and their sons and daughters find themselves in an English-

dominant, English-only environment in which they themselves don't speak the language of their ancestors and are often embarrassed by their connections to foreign languages. This situation is readily seen at the high school I work at. Many students that come from Latino ancestry are the first or second generation that have completely abandoned their families' native language and have been raised in an English-only environment.

Although these aforementioned students don't share the linguistic capabilities and have been acculturated linguistically, often times the students will still embrace parts of their parents' culture. They will often know the foods, music, and social norms, etc. of the native culture in spite of their native language inabilities. This study attempts to assess the academic achievement of those students that are no longer capable of speaking their families' tongue and are enrolled in Spanish 1 high school classes. Are students who come from a Hispanic background, as evidenced by their Spanish surname, but who are not able to speak Spanish, able to achieve academic success more readily than those students who are not from a Hispanic background? Furthermore, do Spanish surname males attain academic success at a higher or lower rate than Spanish surname female students? How do the Spanish surname male and

female students compare with their non-Spanish surname counterparts? The high school in which I work gives a placement test to all of the Hispanic eighth graders that will be taking Spanish at the high school level. Students that have acquired Spanish at home or through relatives will take native language classes conducted solely in Spanish. Through this system, it is entirely possible to screen out the students that have gained the fluency in Spanish out of school in order to ensure that each Spanish 1 class is enrolled by non-Spanish speaking students. Therefore, the school site is a prime location to identify which variables affect the acquisition of a second language. The control group, which is the Spanish 1 students, will consist of non-Spanish speaking Hispanics as well as the non-Spanish surname boys and girls. Since all of the students have not had a high degree of exposure to Spanish, the Spanish 1 classes in the entire school will be the treatment applied to all beginning Spanish language learners, and the race and gender of these learners will be the variable that I am trying to identify.

Personal Interest

This study is of particular interest to me, because I myself, having been raised in an English-only environment,

was exposed to the same pressures to fit in and excel in American dominant society. However, 12 years ago, in high school, I began the process of learning my first foreign language, and it has been a fascination of mine ever since. I was intrigued and challenged to gain fluency in a new language. To express myself in a way and with words and grammar that I never knew existed. I have continued learning Spanish through the years while working as a bilingual teacher's assistant for four years in an elementary school, and after graduating, working as a second grade bilingual teacher for three years. I have earned a bachelor's degree in Spanish and have never lost my love for the language. My life has truly doubled as I now enjoy reading and writing in Spanish, listening to music in Spanish, traveling through Mexico, and most importantly, developing a new set of Hispanic friends that share their culture and language with me. I have since then gone on to study Italian and have gained a high level of fluency in that language as well. It is this love for languages that challenged me to teach Spanish at the high school setting.

In addition, it is the deep respect and admiration that I have for the Hispanic culture, in particular, that encourages me to understand the historically existing gap in academic achievement, and to attempt to understand the

variables that promote and sustain academic disparity. More than simply researching this area, I wish to investigate the implications that this study has on my Spanish 1 classes. This study will hopefully provide me with conclusive data that will have powerful implications in my class as to which students need extra incentives, academic tutoring, and a different perspective, etc. as they progress through Spanish 1 and their other academic classes.

Brief Historical Development

This situation in which a large number of students that come from heterogeneous backgrounds but have learned a homogenous pattern of language is an unavoidable pattern in the United States. Since the early 20th century, people from other countries around the world have seen the United States as a place to improve the quality of life and that of their children. Those that came met strong xenophobic resentment to any culture and especially any language that did not coincide with the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant dominant culture of the time. This intolerance towards heterogeneous minority groups has continued into modern times. Now, however, the racism and intolerance that exists is subtler. The linguistic intolerance is now demonstrated in the legislation and the anti-bilingual education

propositions that are being passed in many states of the United States of America. The linguistic intolerance in modern day America was also manifest in the punishment of students who spoke a foreign language at school. There can be no doubt that from the history of America, little allowance has been given to those languages that are not English, and the result is that many children have been, and continue to be, denied access to their familial native language for fear of a negative, racist or prejudicial action that may be taken against them.

This situation is aggravated by the increasing number of sojourners, people exiling in order to escape dictatorship governments, and immigrants simply attempting to find a place to work and feed their families. This has raised the number of minority non-English speaking groups in America. The southwest, California in particular, is facing an increase in the number of people who come from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This increase has been recognized and fought, by some politicians, such as Pat Buchanan, who stated "the 27 million who have come into our nation since 1970 shall be assimilated and Americanized, introduced fully into our history, culture, the English language and American traditions" (www.gopatgo2000.com/000-c-immigration.html May 28, 1999). Although many Hispanic

students are entering school without the ability to speak fluent English and are then labeled with the pejorative title of English Language Learners, many students that come from parents that previously immigrated to America and have faced the social and political intolerance of their language and customs have chosen to discontinue the use of their native language in the interest of improving their children's chances of succeeding in America.

Significance of Study

This present study is significant for a number of reasons. First of all, it addresses and provides support and data in the area of second language acquisition research and the revitalization of the native language. The results of the study will help support language acquisition theories by providing additional information concerning the affects of gender and background culture and the acquisition of a teenage student's native language that has been lost. Do students that have been exposed to elements of a culture attain superior academic marks more readily than students who do not share the cultural background? Does the influence of a culture that affects the raising of children, yet denies them access to a native language, have a positive benefit on the academic achievement of the native language?

Secondly, the study attempts to recognize the role that gender has on the equation. Not only does this study juxtapose the efficiency by which teenage boys and teenage girls acquire superior grades in Spanish 1 classes, but more importantly, the effects of native language culture are also identified. Data that is received will support hypothetical statements such as: Girls whose families comes from a particular culture will achieve higher grades in Spanish 1 classes more readily than boys who share the same cultural identity. Or perhaps even: Males who do not share the cultural background will achieve better grades in Spanish 1 classes faster than girls whose familial ancestry does come from the culture whose language is trying to be learned.

Another variable of the equation is that pedagogical theorists have mostly focused on primary students that have entered a new country and that attempt to acquire the new country's language. This study brings attention to older students that attempt to reacquire a language that, for a myriad of reasons, has been denied to them.

This study is important, because it provides data regarding Spanish surname students' attempts to regain a language that was lost to them either by their parents, their grandparents, or even earlier. The reacquisition of

language is a universal theme and is found around the world. Any country that has been defeated in war or simply dominated by a foreign power will see their language disappear as native children exchange their foreign language for the dominant one. One example is that areas of the United States that were once Mexican territory where primarily Spanish was spoken are currently dominated by the English language due to the United States victory in the Mexican-American War of 1848. Another example can be seen in America with the disappearance of a large number of Native American languages. It has been reported that there are approximately 6,000 languages in the world of which as many as 90 percent are being lost (Diamond, 1993) with up to half no longer being learned by children. By some time in the next century, all but a few hundred languages could be dead or dying (Boseker, 1994). With languages being lost and discontinued by native speakers, data regarding the ability of students to use their native culture as a background to reacquire proficiency of native languages is paramount for the linguistic diversity of the world.

Finally, this present study is important to social scientists, because it takes into account the research that has been conducted regarding the academic achievement of multiracial groups in the high school setting. It also

provides direct data that will either support or reject the hypothesis that Spanish surname students will perform academically superior to other ethnic groups. This present study also provides data regarding the influence of gender on academic success in Spanish 1 high school classes.

The study is of extreme importance to social scientists, because historically, theory and pedagogical implications have centered on the acquisition of language that occurs as native language speaking children enter primary grades, and almost all of the theories have ignored the effect that gender plays. Furthermore, the subjects of these studies have been students that enter a new country, school and culture. These studies have a very limited view of the scope of language acquisition as defined by academic success, because they focus on the acquisition of a precise, limited number of people. All around the world, second language acquisition is affected by a number of factors, such as age, gender, racism, and revitalizing languages endangered of becoming extinct. This present study focuses on factors that have not already become overanalyzed and saturated by pedagogical theorists and researchers.

Relation of Study to Present Theory

Educational theorists have not yet proposed a theory that would hypothesis the effect of people having a background culture in the language they are attempting to acquire and how that cultural background may promote or inhibit their academic success in the second language. However, theorists have studied, documented, and proposed hypotheses concerning issues of general or overall academic achievement among ethnic groups. Specifically, the educational gap that has existed and continues to exist among the non-Spanish surname Anglo students and their minority counterparts has been the focus of research. Many theories have been suggested in an attempt to explain the difference in academic attainment that exists. The first theory that explains this educational phenomenon is the theory of culture and cognitive development (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Vygotsky, 1978). This theory attempts to explain cognitive development as something that is built from and is entirely dependent on culture and social interactions. Another hypothesis that theorists have suggested is the theory of culture and language conflict (Foley, 1991). In this theory, those minority students see the inherent differences in their native language with that of the dominant social group. According to this theory, students

also notice that there is a conflict in the two cultures. This conflict and tension draws the attention of the student and distracts from academic focus. The result of which is the lowered academic attainment of minority groups. Another theory that has been suggested is the collectivism theory (Triandis, Leung, Villareal, & Clack, 1986; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). This theory states that as some cultures are more idiocentric in nature and others are allocentric, this has a strong effect on academic achievement. Those cultures that emphasize and promote individual achievement will strive to attain individual goals and rewards. Conversely, those students that come from a background that values collectivism, group efforts, and group achievement, they will not perform as well in the competitive American educational setting. Another hypothesis asserts that language minority students and ethnic-minority students are treated differently than mainstream students (Ogbu, 1978; Matute-Bianchi and Ogbu, 1986). This hypothesis claims that this differential treatment is a result of forces both within and outside of school, and that it promotes perspectives and institutions of the majority. Those with power exercise a high degree of hegemony to maintain the balance of power in their favor by limiting academic access to minority students. In the book, The Foundations of Dual

Language Instruction, (Judith Lessow-Hurley, 2000) has characterized another model in an attempt to explain current hypotheses that attempt to blame the culture of the minorities as having a direct, negative influence on academic attainment. Hurley describes that the cultural deficit or deficiency model asserts that ethnic minorities don't achieve educational equality in school because their culture is inadequate in some way (Vereiter & Engelmann, 1966).

Definition of Terms

1. Spanish 1 class--Any class at Rubidoux High School that offers entry-level instruction in Spanish as a foreign language.

2. Language Acquisition--The process of learning a native or a second language.

3. Xenophobia--Extreme dislike or fear of foreigners, their customs, their religions, etc.

4. Hegemony--The position of being the strongest and most powerful and therefore controlling others

5. Spanish Surname Students--Students whose last name is Hispanic or Latino in origin.

6. Acculturation--Cultural modification of a person by adapting to or borrowing traits from another culture.

7. Heterogeneous--Consisting of dissimilar elements or parts.

8. Homogeneous--Consisting of similar elements or parts.

9. Pedagogy--The study of the methods and activities of teaching.

10. Reacquisition of Language--Is the learning of a language that a person hasn't been exposed to yet forms part of their cultural heritage.

11. Methodology--A system of ways of doing, teaching or studying something.

12. Numerical Significance--On a four-point scale, the numerical significance is 1.0 or greater.

List of Assumptions

1. While conducting research, those recorded as Spanish surname students were those students who were raised in homes that participated in Latino activities, cooking, names, lifestyles, etc.

2. No mistakes were made concerning the true origin of the last names.

3. All of the incoming ninth grade students who came from Rubidoux High school feeder schools took the Spanish placement test in the eighth grade and those students that

are taking Spanish 1 are doing so as beginning Spanish speakers.

4. All of the Spanish 1 teachers are fully credentialed and use the same materials, instructional techniques, grading policies in a uniform manner.

5. The three-semester study is truly representative of the student population's general ability to succeed academically in Spanish 1 classes.

6. The grades that were assigned to the students truly equate to the ability in which the students were able to gain fluency in Spanish.

7. If there was not at least a 1.0 numerical significance, it can be assumed that the background culture had no significant effect on the population.

List of Limitations

1. The time of the test is only three consecutive semesters of Spanish language instruction.

2. Grades that were given may not mean the ability to acquire Spanish but may reflect good study habits, personal application, etc.

3. Not all students who have Latino last names have a family background that celebrates and practices Latino culture.

4. There may be students that come from a household that participate elements of Hispanic culture and do not have a Spanish surname.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

Second Language Acquisition is the subject of many researchers and studies and there is a great deal of research that studies topics surrounding the acquisition of a second language. However, the studies that exist and that have currently taken place study the methodology and programs that would promote the acquisition of English as a second language, whereas my study attempts to find a correlation between academic achievement and the students cultural background. There is no existing research that studies and analyzes the exact topic that this present study attempts to investigate. Although there are numerous researchers that have studied the academic success of ethnic groups, no research regarding Spanish or non-Spanish surname students having academic success in a high school Spanish 1 classes could be located. Furthermore, it is problematic to use research and data regarding second language acquisition and the focus on the students acquiring English, because in the present study, the second language that is to be learned is Spanish and academic achievement is assessed rather than language acquisition.

In order to remedy this problem, a wider, more general approach was used to collect and analyze research. In the absence of articles that directly examine, analyze, and discuss the topic of this present study, articles that provided background information regarding the historical educational achievement gap between racial and ethnic groups was used. In these articles different theories and explanations were promoted in an attempt to explain this historic educational phenomenon. In addition, other researchers have understood the academic disparity among the ethnic groups and have attempted to promote various factors that will contribute to greater academic success among all races.

Literature Relating to the Historical Multi-Racial Achievement Gap

The following articles attempt to provide background information regarding the achievement gap that exists among the Anglo and minority groups.

The article titled "High School Attrition among Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Youths" (Velez, 1989) investigates the characteristics and experiences that most substantially influence high school dropout rates. This article found in the journal Sociology of Education examines the influences

that a myriad of variables on the high school academic success and stability of Chicanos, Cubans, Puerto-Ricans, and non-Hispanic whites.

The multi-ethnic subjects of the study were taken from a national longitudinal study done in the early eighties by the National Center for Education Statistics. Among the high school ethnic groups were 1,116 Chicanos, 195 Cubans, 192 Puerto Ricans, and 4,170 non-Hispanic white students. The study is cross-sectional, because the same questionnaire was administered to a large number of students of various ethnic backgrounds. Since the data that was used in this article had previously been attained by an outside source, Velez simply chose the ethnic groups that he wanted to be part of his study. The source of the data obtained by the National Center for Education Statistics is the first questionnaire that was administered in 1980 and then a follow-up questionnaire was conducted in 1982.

Once the data was gathered, Velez conducted a number of statistical techniques in order to isolate the variables to which he was trying to find a correlation. The variables tested included disciplinary problems, educational plans, suspensions, missing class, mother's aspirations, tracking, recent immigration, extracurricular activities, etc.. Velez first used a sample weight to help balance out any outside

factors that may interfere with the study. Once that was achieved, Velez used a maximum likelihood procedure to determine the significance of each of the variables that are in question. This methodology was performed for the four subgroups that comprise the study, and consequently, the results were analyzed individually and compared collectively. The findings of the report were each analyzed and the four groups that were involved in the study were discussed extensively. The results in this study were not presented in an effective manner but almost forced the reader to search for the information.

All of the factors that were used as independent variables did, in fact, have a direct consequence concerning the high school dropout rate and academic stability. However, there were some factors that appear to affect some groups more than others. For example, the variables that most influenced academic performance of high school Chicano students were cutting classes, suspensions, dating, being older, and being female.

The factors that highly influenced the non-Hispanic Anglo students were changing schools, dating, age, and being suspended. Attention was also given to the Puerto Rican and Cuban students as their data was studied in this article. Velez was able to identify the factors that most heavily

influence high school drop out rates and overall academic performance for the ethnic groups he was investigating.

In concluding the article, Velez cites a few references that seemed to be of value as he gained background knowledge on the subject. One reference concerned the subject of high school dropouts Among those was an unpublished manuscript that gives vital statistics concerning the retention rates of Hispanic-American students (Hoffer, 1986). A second reference provided valuable data regarding relatively recent research concerning Hispanic minorities (Portes, & Truelove, 1987).

This article is invaluable to my study, because it provides background knowledge of the many factors that influence high school performance among the Hispanic and Anglo population. The data in this study reinforced with empirical evidence that the Latino dropout rate and high school attrition is much more pronounced than with non-Latino students. Also, in all of the ethnic groups evaluated, student gender was also a high predictor of academic instability and high rate of leaving school. Therefore, it should be expected that in the Spanish 1 class, both Spanish and non-Spanish surname boys will be more academically superior to their female counterparts. The author provides evidence to the assertion that high

school females are not as successful academically as males because the females have to overcome more cultural or social differences.

The statistical techniques that were employed in this study, along with the extremely high number of subjects, give the findings a great degree of validity and credibility. Velez uses data that was collected by the National Center for Education Statistics, a group that used questionnaires with thousands of youth in a variety of ethnic groups. In determining if students of a Spanish surname achieve higher academic success in Spanish 1 high school classes over their non-Spanish counterparts, it is important to gain an extensive knowledge of the many factors that influence high school students both socially and academically.

The article "Perceptions of Multiculturalism, Academic Achievement, and Intent to Stay in School Among Mexican American Students" (Tan, 1999), published in the Journal of Research and Development in Education, offers insight to the suggested correlation between perceived multiculturalism and academic performance in Hispanic and non-Hispanic high school students. It also examines high school students' perceptions of the degree that the school they attend is culturally sensitive, accepting, and relevant to other

cultures, specifically the Hispanics, and identifies a correlation to variables associated with academic success. Tan's article proposes two hypotheses: The greater the perceived school multiculturalism, the greater the perceived ease of learning; The greater the perceived school multiculturalism, the greater the perceived school achievement and intent to stay in school.

The subjects of the study were both middle and high school students from a rural, agricultural, eastern Washington community. Of the school districts that were selected to participate in the study, three districts had low Hispanic dropout rates and the other three, high. From these school districts, 311 eleventh and 378 eighth grade students were used in the study. Tan revealed very little information regarding the background information of the test subjects and the only research data is gathered through the use of a questionnaire. The nature of the study is cross-sectional, because it gathers information via a survey across many schools.

After Tan selected the school that he wanted to use in his research, he first sent a permission letter to the parents to gain their support and gain permission. He then sent a Student Perception Questionnaire to all of the 11th graders and to all of the 8th graders. The questionnaire

concerned a variety of social, cultural, personal, and academic variables, including intent to graduate from high school, academic ease, grades, a multicultural learning environment, cultural respect, perception of teacher encouragement or parent involvement, getting along socially, and generally feeling good. Of those who were sent the questionnaires, only 311 of the 479 eleventh graders and 378 of the 573 eighth graders completed them.

The questionnaire results were then analyzed using in some cases a two-point and for other variables a five-point scale. The analysis was performed exclusively on the European-American and Mexican-American students by interpreting their answers along a scale and then calculating the mean and standard deviation scores. Each of the variables, from cultural respect to parental involvement, were analyzed and compared, and from these calculations, certain findings were made and recorded.

Of the findings that compared the questionnaire results of the Mexican-American students with the European-American students, the former had "significantly lower perceptions of multiculturalism in the school environment on variables multicultural learning, cultural respect and getting along with others" (Tan, 1999, p.7). Further results provide strong support to the two proposed hypotheses. Evidence

does in fact suggest that the greater the multiculturalism that the students perceive, the greater perceived ease of learning, and the greater the intent to do well academically and to stay in school. Therefore, there is a high correlation between the degree in which a school accepts, celebrates, and respects different cultures, and the degree that students achieve academically, stay positive, and intend to finish school.

The references cited that appear to have been important for this study include an article written to provide an understanding concerning the empowerment of minorities (Cummings, 1989). Another article identifies the factors that relate to low socio-economic minority academic attainment (Causey, 1993). The third article that provides information pertinent to the study identifies ethnic and racial patterns of educational achievement (Mare & Winship, 1988).

Gerdean Tan's article is important to my study for many reasons. It provides meaningful background information as to the history of poor Mexican-American academic performance. The article also introduces and explains the Theory of Culture and Cognitive Development, which is helpful in explaining the academic variations in high school achievement among different cultures. Tan also provides a

comprehensive and complete definition of multiculturalism. Furthermore, the sound methodology and concrete results of the correlation between perceived multiculturalism and academic performance are invaluable to my study. The results of Tan's study are based on a sound interpretation of empirical evidence and can therefore offer a high degree of validity to any studies in the field.

Students that come from different cultures either have their individual culture validated, and accepted or ignored. Tan's study provides proof that there is a strong correlation between the degrees to which a student's culture is accepted and respected in school and with academic performance and positive feelings about school. Therefore, non-Hispanic Spanish 1 students, who are made up primarily of Anglo students, have their culture validated and will hence perform well in class. On the converse, Hispanic students, even though the content of the Spanish 1 course teaches and celebrates the Hispanic culture, may attend a school that doesn't promote an acceptance of their culture and will therefore not perform as well as their non-Hispanic counterparts.

The third article, "Allocentric and Idiocentric Self-Description and Academic Achievement Among Mexican American and Anglo American Adolescents" (Bernal, Dabul, & Knight,

1995) discusses the cultural differences and self perceptions between the two cultures, and they attempt to make a correlation to academic success. This article, found in the Journal of Social Psychology, uses the terminology allocentric traits as those traits belonging to a culture that promotes a collectivist or socially constructed identity, while idiocentric traits are those found in cultures that promote individual success, opportunity or growth. The authors suggest that those who are from a culture that promotes an allocentric viewpoint are in direct opposition to the American educational system that promotes individual success and achievement. Their hypothesis is that Mexican-American students more highly associate with the allocentric view, and conversely, that Anglo-American adolescents regard themselves as more idiocentric in nature. The second hypothesis is that idiocentrism is associated with higher academic performance and that allocentrism is associated with lower academic performance.

The subjects of this study were 112 seventh through ninth grade students from a junior high school in Mesa, Arizona. The Anglo-American and Mexican-American subjects experienced a high degree of homogeneity in socioeconomic status and academic achievement. Furthermore, there was no significant difference found regarding the gender in

concerning academic success in school. The subjects consisted of 80 Anglo-Americans and 32 Mexican-Americans ranging from the ages of 12.4 to 16 years of age. Of the Mexican-American subjects, 82 percent had been born in the United States and 18 percent had been born in Mexico.

The study is based on surveys that were performed by female Hispanic graduate students. Individually, they interviewed the participating students on the campus for approximately 30 minutes each. In the interview the subjects were asked open-ended questions concerning how they describe themselves as people. They were also asked to list as many self-descriptors as possible. The Scholastic Competence scale from the Self-Perception Profile for Children was given in order to assess the students' feelings about their academic success. The answers were then evaluated using a four-point scale and were coded as either allocentric or idiocentric. After the semester had ended, the school provided the researchers with the students' grade point averages.

In order to further analyze the data, a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used and found no significances in the average number of total responses. The researchers then created a proportion index by dividing the total number of allocentric responses by the total number of

responses. The responses were then compared with the academic success of the students.

The researchers made two discoveries regarding cultural self-descriptors and their correlation to academic success. First, they noted that Mexican-American students gave a higher percentage of allocentric responses than did the Anglo-American students suggesting that as a culture, the former tend to be more group-oriented in nature. The second finding is that the students who held idiocentric beliefs did in fact outperform those with allocentric views. What is unfortunately unclear is if the Mexican-American subjects were grouped together, all deemed to be allocentric, and then compared academically to the Anglo students or if the researchers chose to compare the students individually to compare their responses with their grade point average. This point needs to be addressed in order to validate the study and give its findings reliability.

There are many references made by the authors that appear to be important to this study. Among those is a book that asserts that Latin-Americans and Hispanics are more allocentric than other ethnic groups (Marin & Triandis, 1985). Another resource used in the study makes a competitive study between allocentric and idiocentric tendencies (Clack, Leung, Triandis, & Villareal, 1985). The

third resource that seems to be useful to the present study is an article that correlates culture and self and then describes the academic, cognitive, and emotional implications that exist (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

This study very strongly relates to my topic, because it provides more information as to why Hispanic students are not as successful in school as non-Hispanics. The study indicates that many cultures are allocentric and focus on the well-being of the group, helping others, and a strong sense of community, which causes those cultures to be in direct opposition to the American educational system. Conversely, non-Hispanic students, whose culture promotes individuality and personal accomplishments, would be advantageous in the school setting. Therefore, this present study would suggest that the Non-Hispanic surname students would be more academically successful in Spanish 1 classes, because they would have a belief system of personal academic success that would promote the acquisition of good grades in class.

The article "Educational Inequality among White and Mexican-Origin Adolescents in the American Southwest: 1990" (Warren, 1996) investigates the disparaging educational outcomes among the non-Hispanic Anglo, Mexican-American, and Chicano students. This article found in the journal

Sociology of Education attempts to validate or reject the claims and assertions made by researchers throughout the years concerning multi-ethnic educational outcomes. The three hypotheses that are tested are as follows: First, the gap in educational attainment between White and Mexican origin adolescents is due to differences in family-background characteristics between the groups. Next, the gap is due to differences between them in English-language ability. The final hypothesis proposes that adolescents who migrate during their school years suffer educational disadvantages relative to other adolescents. The purpose of the article is to evaluate these possible explanations to the educational gap between Hispanic and non-Hispanic Anglo students.

In this investigative study, data was gathered using the 1990 Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS) as the source. Of the three groups that were studied, all of them resided in five southwestern states and were between the ages of 17 to 20. The subjects were comprised of 11,081 Whites, 4,128 Chicanos and 7,409 Mexican-immigrants. Once the subjects were chosen, the PUMS files were acquired and the information those files contained provided the data needed.

In order to analyze the possible causes of the educational gap between the ethnic groups, an in-depth,

comprehensive investigation was held concerning the affects of migration patterns, ability to speak English, and family-background characteristics. In each category, various variables were established to give a greater understanding of the sub elements of each section. Warren asserts that the previous research regarding this topic was limited and somewhat inconclusive, because the variables associated were not as comprehensive as they needed to be. Secondly, each individual student's variables were matched in accordance to the individual characteristics. They were separated by the three categories and by the three ethnic populations that were being studied. Thirdly, transition from each year of high school to the next was examined so as to better pinpoint the education inequalities that transpire as students are promoted throughout the grades. Finally, the calculations regarding percentages, mean, and standard deviation were conducted in order to make the data meaningful and in order to be able to use the data to defend or reject the hypotheses.

Of the three hypotheses that are proposed by Warren, only the assertion that differences in family background strongly accounts for the inequality in academic attainment was confirmed. The Mexican immigrant adolescents were 29 percent less likely than Non-Hispanic Anglo students to

transition each year from the ninth through the twelfth years in high school. The Chicano students were also 15 percent less likely than Anglo students to transition to twelfth grade. The findings concerning the second hypothesis relating to the role of English-language ability were then discussed. Warren states that Mexican origin students are academically disadvantaged to the Anglo students because of their lack of proficiency in English. He also asserts that there is "generally a strong association between adolescents' English language ability and their odds of successfully completing [academic] transitions" (Warren, 1996, p.152). However, in direct contradiction to his previous statements, Warren explains that although there does exist a multi-ethnic educational gap, that it cannot be explained by or attributed to differences in English-language proficiency. The third hypothesis regarding the role that migration patterns play in the inequality of educational attainment was discussed. Again the author gives apparent contradictory information, because he states that those who migrated between the years of the study were at a disadvantage to those whose migration patterns were more consistent. He adds that "even after the adolescents' migration histories were held constant, the Mexican-immigrant. . . were still at a considerable

disadvantage compared to the White adolescents" (Warren, 1996, p. 152). However, after making these previous assertions, Warren insists that he found that there was no association between migration history and the ability to transition from ninth to twelfth grade, and that these results offer no support for his third hypothesis.

There are two references that appear to offer background information for the educational inequality study. The first identifies the affects of low academic attainment and examines the correlation it has with economic stability (Fogel, 1996). Another reference that appeared to be valuable to this present study is one, which examines the sociological and psychological acculturation of Mexican-American students (Chan, Manaster, & Safady, 1992).

The first benefit of this article to my project is that it reconfirms that there is in fact an inequality in the academic achievement between non-Hispanic Anglo students and the Hispanic students. The article also is a valuable resource because the author cites many researchers that have conducted their own research in this field and Warren offers a brief critique of their methodologies and their findings. The hypotheses proposed in this study contain themes that are essential to the understanding of academic success in high school among ethnic groups and the findings can be

inferred and applied to Spanish 1 classes. According to Warren, the proficiency in English and migration patterns should not influence academic success and that one variable that does play a detrimental role is the family-background characteristics, specifically regarding parents' educations, parents' occupations, family income, and household structure. It should be noted that to close the educational gap, according to Warren, educators and parents should focus on ameliorating equality on the social level and the educational benefits will follow.

The fifth article, titled "The Impact of Racial and Ethnic Segregation on the Achievement Gap in California High Schools" (Rumberger & Willms, 1992), attempts to determine the extent to which, currently, there is racial and ethnic segregation in California high schools and also to what extent does this segregation affect academic performance. Rumberger and Willms, in their article found in the Journal of Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, use a comprehensive means to identify variables regarding segregation and academic achievement that have direct consequences on an individual, school, state, and national level. The exact purpose of the authors of this study is to examine the extent of racial and ethnic segregation in California high schools and attempt to assess whether

segregation contributes to differences in achievement between ethnic groups.

In this comparative study, the subjects were twelfth grade students from the 784 regular high schools as well as the state's six largest districts: Los Angeles with 54 high schools, San Diego with 17, San Francisco with 12, East Side Union with 10, Kern Union with 10, and Grossmont Union High School District with 9. Based on the number of twelfth grade students who took achievement tests that were administered by the California State Department of Education, their data was gathered from the California Assessment Program or CAP. Data was gathered from a total number of 198,127 students from the twelfth grade.

Rumberg and Wills, in this article, collected two types of data. The data on schools was provided from the California Basic Educational Data Systems (CBEDS) from the 1988 to 1989 academic school year. Individual students' data was gathered from the California Assessment Program (CAP) including academic development of Language Arts, Math, as well as additional demographic and educational information.

The authors implemented a complex analysis of the data. The variables regarding segregation were measured using the CBEDS information regarding ethnic enrollment. Of all of

the students' various ethnic backgrounds, the analysis was limited to the Asian, Black, Hispanic and White groups, because they compose more than 96 percent of the total population. They developed dependent measures of student achievement and constructed two types of independent variables: student-level and school-level variables. Student achievement was measured by using the CAP scores, and by calculating the mean CAP score for entire schools and for each of the four ethnic groups within each school. They then standardized the reading and mathematics scores for each individual student, and at the group level, by using the state means and standard deviations. Student-level variables and school level variables were established.

Once these parameters were set, the authors set forth to determine the measure or degree of segregation and also to estimate the impact of segregation. The measure of segregation, which limited itself to between school segregation of racial or ethnic groups, was established by using two indices: the dissimilarity index and the isolation index. Both indices have a range of 0 to 1. The dissimilarity indicates the proportion of students that would have to change schools in order to achieve an equal distribution of students from ethnic groups in a given district or statewide. The isolation index can be

interpreted as "the probability that students are exposed to members of their own ethnic group rather than to members of other ethnic groups" (Rumberger & Willms, 1992, p.382). Segregation was estimated at both the state level and also in each of the six largest districts in California.

Estimating the impact of segregation required some complex calculations and statistical procedures. First, the mean achievement levels in the CAP reading and mathematic scores were calculated. The mean achievement level among the six largest districts was also established. In order to estimate the impact of segregation, a relatively new statistical technique known as the hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) was implemented in the study. By using the HLM techniques, four different models were developed. The first was a "null" model, and the second used dichotomous variables for four of the ethnic groups that were tested. The estimated coefficients "provide a measure of the gap in achievements between each ethnic group" (Rumberger & Willms, 1992, p.383). This second model was also able to estimate the mean achievement within each district. The third model was used to determine the adjusted district means after controlling for background characteristics. Finally, the fourth model was used to test the school-level variables in adjusted mean achievement.

By using the aforementioned methodology, there were a variety of findings concerning the extent of racial and ethnic segregation. Of all the high school students who participated in this study, Anglo students composed a little more than half of the total population and Hispanics made up about one quarter. The authors assert that in order to achieve an equal distribution of races and ethnicities, the findings indicate that more than one half of the students would be forced to change schools. They state that the White group scored highest on the isolation index, which means that they are most likely to be surrounded by other Anglos. The extent to which the other ethnic groups are segregated is discussed, and empirical evidence is used to support and provide details. The authors assert that their findings that high schools across the state of California are still highly segregated are consistent with recent national figures.

The extent in which the analysis of data indicates an achievement gap among the ethnic groups is discussed. Evidence supports the position that there is a high academic disparity among the ethnic groups. The achievements gap between Whites and minority groups do not appear to be diminishing. In fact among the six districts, there was a significant difference in minority scores in language arts

and mathematics. The findings also indicate that the minority students' low academic level is strongly associated with family and individual circumstances, such as parent education. Simply stated, there is an extremely strong correlation to the academic success of students with parents with a high average educational level as compared to those with parents with a low average. The authors note that a gap exists between the different ethnic groups and that results varied among school districts.

There were many research articles and books cited as resources in this study. The first of which is an article that identifies current dimensions and future trends among the disadvantaged population (McDill, Natriello, & Pallas, 1989). The second article that appears to have been useful deals with multi-ethnic academic achievement in public schools (Bryk & Lee, 1989).

This study's contents, analysis, and findings are invaluable to my study for many reasons. First, they provide empirical evidence to the assertion that segregation is still active in the Californian educational system. This segregation is found in and between schools suggesting that students are separated in their own high schools, by tracking, etc., and that many schools have high ethnic populations that compose the vast majority of the schools

population. There is a strong likelihood that White students attend a school that has superior resources, teachers with more experience and training, parents with a high average educational level, and have a population that enjoys a fairly high socio-economic status. This article provided evidence that the minority students attend schools that have low resources, teachers that are not as highly trained, parents with a low average educational level, and a population that does not have the economic stability that is enjoyed by their Anglo counterparts. This disparity among ethnic groups is bound to have a consequence in academics. In the Spanish 1 class, this article would suggest that Hispanic surname students are greatly disadvantaged for the aforementioned reasons.

Literature Relating to
Proposed Solutions to
the Multi-Racial
Achievement Gap

Given the well-substantiated assertion that non-Hispanic Anglo surname students academically outperform their minority counterparts, the following two articles attempt to provide additional statistical support regarding the academic disparity, and their research provides characteristics and traits that are associated with high academic attainment.

The journal article "Improving the Academic Performance of Hispanic Youth: A community educational model" (Aspiazu, Bauer, & Spillet, 1998) is found in the Bilingual Research Journal. The journal article describes the creation, implementation, and the results of an after-school tutoring site called the Oakwood Family Education Center. The center was designed to follow the philosophy of Liberation Theology, Conscientization, and Liberation Education in an attempt to raise the academic performance of the mainly Hispanic population that it was comprised of. The creation of the educational center is a response to the low academic performance that the Hispanic population had historically been attaining. The center is a community setting that is supported by volunteer teachers, community businesses and parent volunteers. Their purpose is to "empower. . . a disenfranchised community, to better understand the social dynamics of an educational center, and to raise the performance of the Hispanic students" (Aspiazu, Bauer, & Spillet, 1988, p.5).

Although the study centered on the implementation of an educational center designed to help Hispanic students, the actual subjects of this study were the 16 Hispanic parents that were interviewed. These parents were comprised of six lay leaders who helped found the center and ten parents

whose children attended Oakwood Family Education Center. The students invited to participate in the after-school tutorial sessions were children that lived in the Oakwood complex. The complex housed 505 family units, 87 percent of which came from Hispanic backgrounds and more specifically from Central America.

The study is cross-sectional in that it administers a survey to the 16 parent volunteers and then attempts to make meaning of the data. The researchers collected the data through a survey that consisted of open-ended questions. As many of the parents were not able to communicate effectively in English, they were given the questionnaire in Spanish, and then a bilingual and bicultural person analyzed the findings. The article did not describe in great detail the way in which the researchers analyzed the data. The answers to the open-ended questions were given during these interviews; a tape recorder was used to verify the data. Finally, a bilingual researcher translated the data and made observations concerning the effectiveness of the program.

The findings of the study is that there were, in fact, many positive consequences from the after-school tutorial center. The researchers noted that the students who participated were more consistently completing their homework assignments, had a more positive attitude towards

being at school, displayed more confidence concerning academic subject matter, and their parents felt more positive and comfortable that their children would be in a safe, nurturing, comfortable, and helpful environment. All of the goals concerning the tutorial center were achieved except for one. The article fails to mention if the center had been able to empower the disenfranchised community in any way. Discussion concerning this matter should have been developed in the results section of the journal article and the absence of this topic implies that the aforementioned goal wasn't met.

The study was made possible, in part, by a large source of information ranging from books to academic journals. Of those resources, the book written concerning culturally sensitive pedagogy (Villegas, 1991) appears to have been helpful. Another book that was used as a resource centered on Hispanic culture, politics and identity (Fox, 1996).

This study strongly relates to my question, because it provides an example of a successful supplemental program that helped enable Hispanic students to become more successful in school. The parents' satisfaction with the academic progress of their children, and the students' negative perceptions of school provide background information regarding the feelings and emotions of students

and their parents regarding education. Although Hispanic students have historically not exceeded in the American educational system, this study describes the creation and implementation of a program that gave Hispanic students confidence when they had none, and academic success where there was very little.

The article "Pilot Study Examining Factors Associated with Academic Success for Hispanic High School Students" (Reyes & Jason, 1993) identifies the characteristics and variables that are common among Hispanic students who are successful in the high school setting. While most research on the academic success of Hispanics focus on the dropout rate, low socioeconomic factors, and high migration patterns, this article, found in the Journal of Youth and Adolescence, identifies successful Hispanic students and analyzes their attributes and characteristics. The hypothesis that the authors are testing is that the least at-risk students would perceive greater overall family support, experience greater satisfaction with school, maintain a predominantly gang-free social group, and evidence more positive self-esteem compared with the *most* at-risk groups.

The subjects of the study come from a predominantly Hispanic, urban, poverty-stricken high school that had a

dropout rate of 52 percent of the student population. From the total school population, 24 tenth grade students were selected for this study because they were identified as being low-risk students and another 24 were used because they met the requirements of being a high-risk student. The students met the requirements as determined by their ninth grade attendance rate and academic achievement level. Those who had an absenteeism rate over 20 percent and had failed a minimum of three courses in a semester were placed on the high-risk category. Those students who had an absenteeism rate under 10 percent and had failed any courses would meet the requirements of the low-risk category. Of the total 48 Hispanic students, whose ages ranged from 15 to 17, 22 were male and 26 were female.

In this comparative study, data was acquired by interviewing each participant for 50 minutes during his or her study period. The two interviewers that gathered the data were both bilingual and bicultural. The participating students were asked 52 questions which covered topics such as family background, overall school satisfaction, and gang pressures. They were then administered the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale to acquire additional information regarding the students' self-perception. The Hollingshead's four-factor index of social position was used

to assess the family backgrounds. Finally, family support, overall school satisfaction, and gang pressures was each assessed by having the participants answer yes-no type questions.

In order to analyze the data, relatively simple statistical techniques were implemented in this study. In both the low-risk and the high-risk groups, interpreting and categorizing the data received from the interviews calculated a mean and standard deviation. To better understand the role of each individual variable, a discriminate function analysis was used. In this process, the different variables were entered in as "predictors of high- vs. low-risk group membership" (Reyes and Jason, 1993, p. 66) the individual correlation between the variables and belonging to a high- or low-risk group was established.

The findings of this study are numerous. First, there was no apparent difference in socioeconomic status and family structure between the high- and low-risk students. Therefore, according to this study, there was no evidence that supports the position that poverty and familial variables lead to success or failure in school. Secondly, low-risk students reported that they were more satisfied with their school and not as critical as the high-risk students. Another finding was that much fewer low-risk

students were invited into gang membership, and they admitted to fewer gang member acquaintances. Also, strong academic success was associated with students' positive perceptions of the school. Finally, regarding the effect of gender, it was discovered that more Hispanic females perceived that their parents were more involved in their education that, interestingly, seems to contradict the traditional societal position that is highly associated with the Hispanic culture.

This study cited many resources that appeared to be useful. Among those was an unpublished dissertation that examined the various reasons that the Hispanic population has such a high dropout rate (Kyle, 1984). The second article cited that is of apparent value deals with urban school reform and its effects on Hispanics (Hill, 1979).

The findings in this study are important to my project, because they identify factors of academically successful high school students. Most of the literature that I have located on the subject of the factors of race and gender supports the position that Hispanic surname high school students are not as successful in school as are their ethnic counterparts. Hispanic students are associated with a high percentage of dropping out, low scores on standardized tests, taking classes on a low-track system. The majority

of literature and studies that have been conducted on that subject, tend to focus on the negative influences, language barriers, cultural identification with allocentric traits, and other factors that have a strong correlation with low academic attainment in high school. The value of this study is that it identifies the positive characteristics of Hispanic students that are successful in high school and the implication is that the variables that make up a successful student should be reinforced by educators and parents.

Summary of the Literature

The aforementioned literature that has been reviewed and analyzed has provided a contextual backdrop in which to conduct the present study. The literature examined is comprised of articles that showed the historically disparaging academic achievement rate between Spanish surname and non-Spanish surname students. Factors having a direct causal relationship with negative educational output were identified and the last two articles offered insight to variables that positively affect academic performance. Apart from providing a contextual backdrop in which to conduct the present study, the literature that was examined in this study does not show the effects that culture has on academic performance in Spanish 1 classrooms, and therefore

does not provide direct support or evidence concerning the project. In addition to the lack of research concerning cultural factors in the academic success of Spanish 1 classes specifically, there also exists a lack of research regarding the effects that gender have as another variable. As has been previously noted, research concerning second language instruction has historically focused on primary education, teaching English as a second language, and the benefits of various methodologies concerning primary language and second language instruction. This current study will be useful to serve as a catalyst to further research of culture and gender affects on academic attainment in high school Spanish 1 classes.

CHAPTER THREE

DESIGN METHODOLOGY

Scope of the Study

Under the broad category of second language acquisition, this study addresses the acquisition of Spanish, specifically, the academic achievement of Spanish and non-Spanish surname male and female high school students. The research conducted compares the grades received in Spanish 1 classes for three consecutive semesters, through 1999 to 2001 at Rubidoux High School. The grades represent the ability of the students to acquire the second language. The total number of student semester grades was 907 including 311 Spanish surname students and 596 non-Spanish surname students. There were five teachers who taught the Spanish 1 language classes and therefore participated in this study. The grades of the three semesters of Spanish 1 classes were evaluated based on the semester grades each child received. Therefore, each individual child was evaluated based upon the grades he or she received during the three semesters of Spanish language instruction.

Direct Question to be Studied

"Is there a difference in academic success between Spanish and non-Spanish surname students in high school Spanish 1 classes?"

Hypothesis to be Tested

My hypothesis is that Spanish surname female students will achieve more academic success than her male and non-Spanish surname counterparts. I believe that those female students who have been raised with a Latino influence, though they have been denied access to Spanish in the home, will be able to gain fluency more readily. Non-Spanish surname students who have no background in Latino culture have nothing to associate the new words with. They are learning a new culture and language, and therefore, their attempts to process this information will be delayed. Although the male Spanish surname children have been raised in a Latino household, my hypothesis is that the non-Spanish female counterparts will achieve greater academic success.

Firm Basis of Understanding Methodology

Paramount to this process of research investigation is that the Latino eighth grade students, before transferring to ninth grade at Rubidoux High School, take a native

language Spanish placement test. In the placement tests, the students are asked their names, ages, and any languages they speak at home. They are then asked to write paragraphs in Spanish given a variety of prompts. The foreign language department head of Rubidoux High School, who has a vast amount of experience assessing Spanish language writing, then evaluates the writing samples. The department head enlists the aide of any other capable teachers who are willing to assist the evaluation process. Those students who show proficiency in written Spanish will be placed on a list of those who will take one of a series of native language Spanish classes. The classes range from beginning level Spanish for Spanish speakers to advanced placement of Spanish language literature. Any student that registers for their schedule and has a Latino last name is asked the languages they speak at home. Again any student that speaks Spanish at home will take native language classes. Thirdly, at the beginning of the semester, any students that are identified by the teacher as possessing Spanish language skills are referred to their counselor and are placed in more advanced Spanish classes. This three-step process ensures that any student that takes Spanish 1 student is in fact a student that is beginning Spanish student.

Treatment

The treatment applied to all students involved in the research is the Spanish 1 class. There are many similarities that all of the Spanish 1 teachers, who are involved in this research, share. Every teacher is recognized by the state of California, in particular, by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing as meeting the qualifications to teach in a high school classroom as they are fully credentialed. Furthermore, the teachers involved have a vast experience having taught Spanish as a second language for many years. The teachers are also fluent in Spanish and possess an insight and a profound understanding of the language. The majority of the teachers are Latino and have spoken Spanish since childhood, and those who are not Latino have a profound understanding of the Spanish language and Latino culture. In addition, to help ensure uniformity of treatment, the students who participated in this study were all given the same Spanish 1 curriculum and were taught with the same Spanish 1 *Bravo* textbook series.

Sample

The sample is the students that attend classes at Rubidoux High School located in Jurupa Unified School

District and the selection includes those students who met the requirements to matriculate into a Spanish 1 classroom. The majority of the selection is freshmen taking a foreign language for the first time, although there are also older students in each class. Most of the students taking Spanish 1 are students that are completing the high school requirements of taking two years as a foreign language in order to graduate. The students who took part in the study are part of an impoverished community and attend an overpopulated, under-performing, and economically disadvantaged high school. Another characteristic of the study is that the Spanish 1 students have access to native Spanish speaking students as Rubidoux High School has a large number of recently immigrated students.

The characteristics of the students who participated in the study are both male and female. Of the total 907 students' semester grades that were reported, 503 were from female students and 404 male. At the school site, there is a large number of students who come from low socio-economic conditions and also from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Another characteristic of the students is that they attend a school that has a large Latino population, and therefore have a resource of Spanish language as a popular language spoken at the school.

The number of the students that are studied and evaluated is large enough to safely conduct this survey without skewing or distorting the data contributing to the validity of the study. The subjects of this present study were treated in compliance and adherence to a high degree of ethical standards. The major safeguard put in place is that the privacy of the students was maintained during the duration of the study and the reporting of the results. No information regarding the students' full names, addresses or phone numbers was reported in keeping with the security of the subjects.

Data Collection Techniques

The collection of data for this study was acquired using the grades that were reported from the second semester grades of the Spanish 1 teachers during the 2000-2001 and both semesters of the 2001-2002 year. The names and grades were reported to the admissions and records office, and the data was then acquired through the computer database with the help of the office's secretary. After receiving a list of the names and their corresponding grades, the data was placed into sub groups. The four individual sub-groups consisted of Spanish surname males, Spanish surname females, non-Spanish males, and non-Spanish females. Each of the

four semesters that were evaluated was divided into these subgroups. In each of the subgroups, possible grades ranging from A to F were listed on a reporting sheet. The data provided from admissions and records were then evaluated. The last names were evaluated as being either a Spanish surname student or not, and the first name was established as being from either male or female. After these variables were decided, the grade the student received indicated where to put a tally mark on the subgroup-reporting sheet. After all of the names and grades were finished, the same technique was applied to the next semester, until eventually all three semesters were evaluated. After the reporting of data was finished the calculations made to establish significance were performed.

The calculations performed in this study were simply to assess a variety of means. The general population mean was calculated as well as the mean for the Spanish and non-Spanish surname respectively. Finally, a mean was calculated for male and female students in each of the Spanish and non-Spanish populations. In order to assess the mean of the general population during the three semesters at Rubidoux High School, a 4.0 grading scale was developed in which an "A" was worth four points, a "B" was worth 3 points, a "C" was worth two points, a "D" was worth 1 point,

and an "F" was worth zero points. The number of tally marks that occurred in each of the grade range was assessed, and the total number of tally marks in each grade was multiplied by the letter grades point value. These calculations were conducted until a total number was concluded. After the total number of student grades divided this number, the mean score was produced. This technique was used to discover the mean score on all of the subgroups, including the Spanish surname students, non-Spanish surname students, and the male and female students for each of those. Finally, a total female and total male mean was calculated. To help ensure the accuracy of the data, further calculations were made. For example, to ensure the accuracy of the whole population mean, both the Spanish surname and the non-Spanish surname students' total scores were divided by the total number of students. If the result of this calculation matched the already calculated mean for the total population, the integrity of the calculated data was safeguarded. After the results had been calculated and verified, the data was transformed into a numerical value and the mean of the subgroups were ready to be juxtaposed and analyzed.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

After having made the calculations necessary to analyze the data collected in the research, this chapter presents the findings and juxtaposes them with the hypothesis. This chapter also includes a discussion of the findings including possible inferences, probable explanations, and implications of patterns and trends. Finally, this chapter concludes with a summary.

Presentation of the Findings

Although there were differences noted in the academic performance of the ethnic and gender groups in Spanish 1 classes, the differences were generally not significant in nature and did not meet the requirements to be labeled numerically significant. The total score was determined by calculating the entire subject population of all of the 907 subjects with three semester grades. That total score represents the number of students that received a particular grade times the point value that the letter grade was assigned. The three semester grades were added together, and then divided as a whole. After the calculations had been conducted, it was concluded that the average mean was

2.114 on a four-point scale. This mean, which is just above a grade "C" will be the base line mean that will be used to juxtapose the other sub-categories with. The mean score of both female and male Spanish surname students, comprised of 311 student semester grades, was 1.965 and the 596 semester grades of the non-Spanish surname students combined for a total of 2.191. Individually, the 152 male Spanish surname students' grade mean was 1.849 and the 159 corresponding female grades were calculated as a mean of 2.082. Of the 596 non-Spanish surname students, the male portion of 252 semester grades was determined as a mean of 2.024, and the 344 corresponding female grades' mean score was 2.314. Adding both Spanish and non-Spanish surname males, their total mean score of the 503 student semester grades was 1.955, and the 404 grade total female mean was 2.241. Table 1, which follows on the next page, provides a visual representation of the results.

Discussion of the Findings

Along with the discussion of the findings, this chapter also allows for inferences, implications, and probable explanations to be reached. Though they may not be any empirical evidence to substantiate the suggestions made, they are assertions that may help to explain the findings.

Although there was a subtle difference between the academic performances of the subgroups, there is no significant numerical difference to support the hypothesis that female Spanish surname students would most highly succeed academically in Spanish 1 classes. As defined in the definition of terms section, located in chapter one of this study, a numerical significance is any difference that is greater than 1.0 on a 4.0 scale. The results of the study were reliable and conclusive enough to reject the proposed hypothesis. The data also provides evidence of subtle differences in the academic performance of the subgroups in Spanish 1 classes. Refer to Table 1 on the following page for additional information.

While the hypothesis predicted that the female Spanish surname students would surpass the non-Spanish surname students due to reasons concerning the possible cultural identity to with Spanish surname students would identify, the results, though not conclusive, do suggest that the non-Spanish surname students outperform Spanish surname students in Spanish 1 classes. Another trend noticed is that females tended to outperform males and even exceed the total population mean. With the total population mean at 2.114, the female students' grades determined a mean of 2.241 while the male students' grades calculated a mean of only 1.955.

Table 1. Student Achievement Data

Description	Total Score (Grades x's # of students)	Number of Student Semester Grades reported	Mean Score
Total Population	1917	907	2.114
Total Spanish Surname	611	311	1.965
Total Non-Spanish Surname	1306	596	2.191
Male Spanish Surname	280	152	1.849
Female Spanish Surname	331	159	2.082
Male Non-Spanish Surname	510	252	2.024
Female Non-Spanish Surname	796	344	2.314
Total Male	790	404	1.955
Total Female	1127	503	2.241

Even though these grades do not meet the 1.0 on a 4.0 grading scale to qualify as being significant, this trend was noticed. Another finding that should be noted is that

the highest total mean score of 2.314 was recorded by the female non-Spanish surname students, while conversely, the lowest score of 1.849 pertains to the male Spanish surname students. It should be expected that the average grade should be a "C" or a 2.0 on a 4.0 grade point average, however all of the mean scores fell below that mark. The total population score and every other subsection fell below the average "C" score scoring a "C-" average. The final trend that was noticed is that all of the averages are extremely close in score. The grade point average range in this 907 grade collection was around 0.5 with the highest being 2.314 and the lowest 1.849.

Regarding this present study, a few inferences can be made. First, it can be inferred that generally speaking, the Spanish and non-Spanish surname students performed with relative equal effectiveness in the Spanish 1 class. Since grades are based on homework, class work, tests/quizzes, and participation, the students produced similar output levels. Another inference that can be made is that all of the subcategories of students were able to acquire the Spanish language with a similar level of expedience.

Along with the many inferences that have been made, there are two probable explanations that help to explain the findings of the study. First, even though it was assumed

that Spanish surname students to some degree identify or participate in the Latino culture, perhaps they, and generations before them, have been entirely acculturated to the dominant Anglo culture and have completely abandoned their ancestral Latino culture. Secondly, in the Spanish 1 classroom, academic performance is not always evidence or proof of Spanish language acquisition. It is entirely plausible that even if Spanish surname students acquired or maintained more written, reading, oral or listening comprehension proficiency in Spanish, the grade in the classroom reflected student output instead of student learning. Therefore, non-Spanish surname students who do not have the proficiency in Spanish theoretically could outperform their Spanish surname counterparts academically because of their ability to complete class work, homework, etc.

In light of the historically dramatic educational gap between dominant and minority groups, the Spanish surname students were able to stay academically competitive with the non-Spanish surname students. The implications that can be made is that the reasons the Spanish students stayed academically competitive is due to the fact that the Latino culture is explored, taught, and celebrated in the Spanish 1 class. Perhaps the educational gap would close if the

mainstream American educational system would embrace and celebrate the cultural differences among the student population. This study provides support to the assertion that this validation of cultures would have a positive effect on academic achievement.

Summary

The results of this study show that no substantial numerical differences exist between the groups, because the largest difference reported among the subgroups was 0.5 on a 4.0 scale. However, the research conducted and the data reported are valuable in that they provide empirical evidence of the effects of a number of variables on success in Spanish 1 classes. The findings can be synthesized and hypothesized for further the research on this subject.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Included in Chapter Five is a presentation of conclusions that are based on the present project. Recommendations for future research are discussed and a summary of the study is explained.

Conclusions

Data that has been gathered and analyzed for this project has rejected my hypothesis that female Spanish surname students will achieve more academic success than her male and non-Spanish surname counterparts. The results do not support that assertion, because the difference between the mean female Spanish surname students and the other subgroups were less than 1.0 on a 4.0 scale. Although the hypothesis has been proven erroneous, other trends and patterns should be noted. The following are examples of which that have been gleamed from the data. First, females scored higher in Spanish 1 classes than did their male counterparts. Second, non-Spanish surname students performed better academically than Spanish surname peers. The third conclusion that can be made is that the respective surname students scored relatively close to the general

population mean, which was 2.114 on a 4.0 scale. There appears to be no substantial advantage or disadvantage regarding the effects of culture, background, etc. to the academic achievement in Spanish 1 high school classes.

Recommendations

The recommendations resulting from the project are limited due to the lack of a direct, specific answer to the hypothesis. However, due to the relatively low whole population mean average, more should be done to raise semester grades in high school Spanish 1 classes, specifically for male and Spanish surname students. Furthermore, the literature that was analyzed in this study provides evidence that there is a substantial educational achievement gap between the dominant majority group and the many minority groups that comprise American schools. Though the study does not provide data directly relevant to this topic, it is evident that more should be done to close the gap in an attempt to ameliorate the social and ethnic inequalities, and to bring together people from multi-racial backgrounds.

Limitations of the Study Design

The study was greatly affected by a number of factors that were beyond the scope of this project. Many variables that would greatly alter the results of the study were unexamined and researched. First, the overall grade point average of all of the participants of the study was not taken into account while averaging the Spanish G.P.A. Students that are already high achievers would appear to have learned a great deal of Spanish when they simply possess superior study skills, determination, motivation, etc. Alternatively, students that are generally low achievers with poor study skills, and little motivation and determination will invariably transfer those characteristics into the Spanish class. Secondly, there was no measure of the degree of Latino cultural awareness and acceptance that the Spanish surname students possessed. Also, the non-Spanish surname students may actually have a Latino background. In addition, it is not established if the grades that were reported actually reflect proficiency in Spanish. Another limitation of this study is that although the treatment was relatively uniform, the extent to which there is a difference in the effectiveness of teachers was not examined. Of the five teachers that took part in the

survey, surely some communicate and nourish the students more than others. The students of these teachers clearly possess a direct advantage over the others. Finally, another limitation of this study is that there was no direct research on this subject and the research that was found was too general, focusing on the educational gap among racial groups instead of focusing on the effects of culture on attaining superior grades in Spanish classes.

Summary

Much research has been conducted regarding the acquisition of a second language in the primary setting, whether bilingual or monolingual instruction is most beneficial for students, etc. Research regarding the effect of culture and gender on academic performance in the high school foreign language class is an area that is virtually ignored by modern researchers. However, this area is of growing importance as the Spanish surname students are continuing to be a major racial group educated in American schools. The historic pressure on minority students to acculturate into dominant mainstream culture is forcing a growing number of people to abandon their native language and to adopt the language of the dominant group. Therefore, a growing number of students will be experiencing their

first opportunity to learn Spanish during high school.
More research needs to be conducted in this area so that
those students are better served as they attempt to regain
that which was lost to them.

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